

CLAIMS

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

- 1 1. A method for facilitating attention to a communication, comprising:
2 associating a quantity of at least one attention unit to a first entity;
3 allowing said first entity to provide a communication to a second entity, wherein
4 said communication has an associated number of at least one attention unit and at least
5 one associated criterion; and
6 changing a number of attention units associated with at least one of said first
7 entity and said second entity when said criterion is satisfied.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said communication comprises an email
2 message.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein said criterion includes at least one of the
2 following:
3 satisfying a request included in said communication;
4 said second entity receiving said email message;
5 said second entity opening said email message;
6 said second entity opening an attachment to said email message;
7 said second entity responding to said email message;
8 said second entity saving said email message; and
9 said second entity forwarding said email message.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein said communication comprises a meeting
2 request.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein said criterion includes at least one of the
2 following:

3 satisfying a request included in said communication;
4 said second entity receiving said meeting request;
5 said second entity opening said meeting request;
6 said second entity responding to said meeting request;
7 said second entity accepting said meeting request; and
8 said second entity forwarding said meeting request.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein said communication comprises a voicemail
2 message.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein said criterion includes at least one of the
2 following:

3 satisfying a request included in said communication;
4 said second entity receiving said voicemail message;
5 said second entity playing said voicemail message;
6 said second entity responding to said voicemail message;
7 said second entity saving said voicemail message; and
8 said second entity forwarding said voicemail message.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein said communication comprises a telephone call.

1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein said criterion includes at least one of the
2 following:

3 satisfying a request included in said communication;
4 said second entity receiving said telephone call;
5 said second entity answering said telephone call; and
6 said second entity responding to said telephone call.

1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 confirming completion of said criterion prior to said changing said second entity's
3 attention units.

1 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 associating said criterion with said communication.

1 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 allocating a plurality of attention units among a plurality of entities, said plurality
3 of entities including said first entity and said second entity, wherein each of said entities
4 in said plurality of entities is allocated zero or more attention units, wherein said
5 allocating includes said associating a quantity of at least one attention unit to a first
6 entity.

1 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
2 allowing an entity from said plurality of entities to acquire additional attention
3 units.

1 14. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
2 evaluating an entity from said plurality of entities based, at least in part, on a
3 number of attention units associated with said entity.

1 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 providing a benefit to an entity from said plurality of entities based, at least in
3 part, on a number of attention units associated with said entity.

1 16. The method of claim 1, further comprising at least one of the following:
2 establishing a maximum number of attention units can be associated with said
3 first entity;

4 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be acquired by said
5 first entity;
6 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be loaned by said first
7 entity;
8 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be borrowed by said
9 first entity;
10 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be sold by said first
11 entity;
12 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be purchased by said
13 first entity;
14 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be transferred by said
15 first entity;
16 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be earned by said first
17 entity;
18 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be used by said first
19 entity during a time period;
20 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be used by said first
21 entity for said communication;
22 providing a notification indicative of a maximum number of attention units that
23 can be used with said communication;
24 providing a notification indicative of a maximum number of attention units that
25 can be used by said first entity;
26 establishing a minimum number of attention units can be associated with said first
27 entity;
28 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be acquired by said
29 first entity;
30 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be loaned by said first
31 entity;

32 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be borrowed by said
33 first entity;
34 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be sold by said first
35 entity;
36 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be purchased by said
37 first entity;
38 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be transferred by said
39 first entity;
40 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be earned by said first
41 entity;
42 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be used by said first
43 entity during a time period;
44 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be used by said first
45 entity for said communication;
46 providing a notification indicative of a minimum number of attention units that
47 can be used with said communication; and
48 providing a notification indicative of a minimum number of attention units that
49 can be used by said first entity.

1 17. The method of claim 1, further comprising at least one of the following
2 receiving data indicative of said associated number of at least one attention unit;
3 receiving a communication from said first entity, wherein said communication
4 includes data indicative of said associated number of at least one attention unit;
5 establishing a minimum number of attention units that can be associated with said
6 communication; and
7 establishing a maximum number of attention units that can be associated with said
8 communication.

- 1 18. The method of claim 1, wherein said criterion is associated with said
2 communication by default.
- 1 19. The method of claim 1, wherein said changing said second entity's attention units
2 includes increasing said second entity's attention units by said number of at least one
3 attention unit.
- 1 20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
2 decreasing said quantity of attention units by said number of at least one attention
3 unit.
- 1 21. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 establishing an expiration date for at least a portion of said quantity of at least one
3 attention unit.
- 1 22. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 maintaining a count of attention receipt units associated with said second entity.
- 1 23. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving a notification of a completion of said criterion.
- 1 24. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving a notification of a dispute regarding completion of said criterion.
- 1 25. The method of claim 1, further comprising at least one of the following:
2 establishing an exchange for the transfer of attention units;
3 allowing said first entity to run a deficit number of attention units;
4 allowing said first entity to earn at least one attention unit;
5 allowing said first entity to purchase at least one attention unit;

- 6 allowing said first entity to purchase at least one attention unit;
- 7 allowing said first entity to sell at least one attention unit;
- 8 allowing said first entity to borrow at least one attention unit;
- 9 allowing said first entity to lend at least one attention unit;
- 10 allowing said first entity to transfer at least one attention unit;
- 11 allowing said first entity to acquire control of at least one attention unit; and
- 12 allowing said first entity to transfer control of at least one attention unit.

1 26. A method for facilitating attention to a communication, comprising:
2 associating a first quantity of at least one attention unit to a first entity and a
3 second quantity of zero or more attention units to a second entity; and
4 changing at least one of said first quantity of attention units or said second
5 quantity of attention units based, at least in part, on said second entity's handling of a
6 communication received by said second entity from said first entity.

1 27. The method of claim 26, wherein said changing at least one of said first quantity
2 of attention units or said second quantity of attention units includes increasing said
3 second quantity of attention units by a number of attention units associated with said
4 communication.

1 28. The method of claim 26, wherein said changing at least one of said first quantity
2 of attention units or said second quantity of attention units includes decreasing said first
3 quantity of attention units by said number of attention units associated with said
4 communication.

1 29. The method of claim 26, wherein said handling of said communication includes at
2 least one of the following:
3 said second entity satisfying said communication; and
4 said second entity completing a criterion associated with said communication.

1 30. A system for facilitating attention to a communication, comprising:
2 a memory;
3 a communication port; and
4 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port, said
5 processor being operative to:
6 associate a quantity of at least one attention unit to a first entity;
7 allow said first entity to provide a communication to a second entity, said
8 communication including an associated number of at least one attention unit and
9 at least one associated criterion; and
10 change a number of attention units associated with at least one of said first
11 entity and said second entity when said criterion is satisfied.

1 31. A computer program product in a computer readable medium for facilitating
2 attention to a communication, comprising:
3 first instructions for establishing an amount of at least one attention unit to a first
4 entity;
5 second instructions for enabling said first entity to send a communication to a
6 second entity having an associated number of at least one attention unit and an associated
7 criterion; and
8 third instructions for altering a number of attention units associated with at least
9 one of said first entity and said second entity said second criterion is satisfied.